
**HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD
STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION**

Property Address:	460-462 Ridge Street NW	<input type="checkbox"/> Agenda
Landmark/District:	Mount Vernon Square Historic District	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Consent Calendar
		<input type="checkbox"/> Denial Calendar
		<input type="checkbox"/> Permit Review
Meeting Date:	November 29, 2012	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Alteration
H.P.A. Number:	#12-210	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> New Construction
Staff Reviewer:	Brendan Meyer	<input type="checkbox"/> Demolition
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Subdivision

The applicant, Blue Sky Housing LLC (owner), seeks concept review for a new 2 story brick building with 3-story rear wing on the vacant lot at 460 Ridge St NW and combining it with 462 Ridge Street NW for a total of six units. Plans were prepared by, Trout Design Studio. This case was last reviewed in July 2012, with plans by a different architect.

Property Description and Context

In July, the Board determined that a rear third story configured as part of a wide side-gable roof profile was incompatible with the simple two-story character of Ridge Street. The Board arrived at the same determination for a different third floor design in April. Taken together, the Board recommended not further exploring a third floor addition. The applicant then engaged a new design team which has produced a substantially different concept that addresses many of the Board's previous concerns.

Ridge Street is a narrow one-block street originally platted as an alley. The street is characterized by modest, two-story flat-fronted frame and brick houses, rare survivors of what were once typical and fairly common 19th century working class alley dwellings. The street contains at least 7 houses constructed before the Civil War, and despite a period of construction that spans from as early as 1855 to as late as 1911, they have a remarkable consistency of simple block forms, punched windows, and spare detailing. The subject site

The existing structure at 462 Ridge is two stories and three bays wide with a wood modillion and bracket cornice. It is 15 feet wide and 36 feet deep. The right bay is occupied by a garage door on the front façade, a relatively modern alteration that hints that that portion of 462 Ridge is not original to the house. Most likely, 462 Ridge was expanded to the west sometime in the early 20th century and the cornice extended across the new three bay width. The open space to the east of 462 Ridge is two building lots, but only the immediate adjacent lot is part of this concept.

Proposal

The site includes a contributing building in the center with one vacant lot to the east and a private alley to the west. The new concept still includes the renovation of the contributing building and a new two-story flat façade addition in the vacant lot. Instead of adding a third floor to the street facing buildings, a new 3-story massing is proposed at the rear of the lot and connected via an enclosed corridor to the proposed new construction on the east side of the site. The applicant has also expanded the project to use the private driveway on the west of the site. By private easement this driveway is required to provide vehicle access to the interior of the square. The concept proposes to construct a second floor over the easement, thus gaining square footage for the applicant's project but still allowing for vehicle access.

Street facing façades are brick with molded cornices and are fenestrated by double-hung windows with jack arches; all characteristics exhibited by the contributing building. The new façade on the east will be 2 feet taller than the existing building. The new façade on the west will setback slightly from the historic façade and have a vehicle sized opening to accommodate the easement.

The rear three-story structure will be a flat-roof brick structure with traditional punched openings on the west elevation and larger, contemporary openings on the north wall facing the historic building. The connecting corridor also includes stairs up to the second and third floor of the rear structure and has a long compound curved roof and profile. Due to a second adjacent vacant lot, which is not part of the project, this profile will be narrowly visible from the front of the project.

Evaluation

The revised proposal eliminates the most incompatible aspects of the previous attempts – a third floor directly on top of the historic building and a three-story block of new construction at the street face. Instead, the third floor is pushed back towards the rear of the lot as a completely separate three-story structure. The effect is that the small parts of this structure that would be visible from Ridge Street are substantially divorced from the front buildings and so largely read as background buildings. Even the compound curved profile helps to distance and distinguish the new construction from the old. The side and rear elevation of the rear structure are not incompatible with the historic district largely because the interior of the square is private without public alley access. Any views from M Street to the south or 5th Street to the west would be long and narrow and not result in the new construction being substantially visible.

The proposed second floor façade over the easement driveway is an unexpected use of space, filling what would otherwise be a permanent gap in the streetscape where historically a rowhouse once stood. To construct a second floor with an open vehicle entrance at the ground floor is unorthodox but substantially restores the historic street face in a way more compatible with the character of the historic district than the current condition.

Recommendation

The HPO recommends that the Board:

- *Find the concept for a two-story east addition, second story west addition, and three-story rear structure to be compatible with the character of the historic district and consistent with the purposes of the preservation act;*
- *Delegate final approval to staff, and*
- *Reiterate that no part of this recommendation shall be construed as a recommendation for approval or disapproval for any necessary zoning relief.*